For Immediate Release   **Contact**: Rodney Mallett
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DEQ arrests Evangeline Parish plant manager for environmental violations

BATON ROUGE – Today, investigators with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality Criminal Investigation Division and deputies from St. Landry Parish Sheriff's Office arrested an Opelousas man on 12 felony charges involving criminal violations of Plaisance Development Corporation's water discharge permits.

The director of Plaisance Development Corporation, Joseph L. Jones, 57, is alleged to have knowingly violated his Louisiana Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit by not providing monitoring results, causing or allowing unpermitted discharges, and failing to provide proper operation and maintenance for these units. Plaisance Development Corporation operates six wastewater treatment units in Evangeline Parish. The arrest took place in conjunction with a search warrant executed at both Jones' residence and the office of Plaisance Development Corporation.

"DEQ will not tolerate business owners who attempt to cut corners by allowing the illegal dumping of untreated wastewater," DEQ Secretary Peggy Hatch said. "We will continue to protect human health and the environment by pursuing anyone found to be allowing or engaging in illegal disposals and discharges."

Violations of LPDES permit provisions, upon convicted, can result in a fine of not less than $5,000, but no more than $50,000 per day of violation, or imprisonment for not more than three years, with or without hard labor, or both. Both Jones and Plaisance Development Corporation face the same felony charges.

Jones also faces civil penalties for violations relating to his water discharge permit.

An arrest does not constitute guilt in a criminal case. All evidence compiled during the investigation is presented to the area prosecutors who determine if formal charges are warranted.

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